

**July 10, 2009**

**(WASHINGTON, D.C.) -- Continuing his effort to ensure America's veterans receive all the benefits they have earned, U.S. Congressman Jason Altmire (PA-04) today voted to increase funding for veterans' health care services.** This funding will help to ensure that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has the resources it needs to treat more than 6.1 million veterans in 2010, including more than 419,000 veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Act passed by a vote of 415-3. With passage of this bill, Congress has provided a 58 percent increase in funding for veterans health care and benefits since January 2007, resulting in an increase of 8,300 claims processors, 145 community-based outpatient clinics, and 70 Vet Centers.

**"My highest priority in Congress has always been ensuring that America's veterans receive quality health care and all the benefits they were promised," Altmire said. "This legislation will help to improve the speed with which veterans' claims are processed and will improve the accessibility and quality of the VA's health care system. America's veterans have made incredible sacrifices to protect our country and I will always work to ensure that they are receiving the support they deserve."**

In addition to increasing funding for veterans health care in 2010, this bill also provides advanced funding for veterans health services in 2011. This will ensure that veterans health care funding is not delayed by lengthy and contentious budget debates in Congress. Advanced funding for VA health care is a long – time priority for leading veterans' organizations, including Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Legion, and the Disabled American Veterans.

During the floor debate on this bill, Altmire pressed the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Inspector General (VA OIG) to use some of the \$19 million in increased funding they will receive under this bill to launch a second, more in-depth investigation into the VA Regional Office in Pittsburgh's mishandling of veterans' benefits claims. A VA OIG report released in May 2009 found that due to a delay in the processing of veterans' benefits claims, the Pittsburgh VA's performance numbers were artificially inflated, which led to employees receiving \$300 bonuses. For more about Congressman Altmire's efforts to investigate this issue, click [here](#) .